

## General Etiquette Tips

- ✓ **Use common sense.** People with disabilities want to be treated the same way everyone else is treated. Remember, a person is a person first. The disability comes second.
- ✓ **Don't be afraid to offer assistance.** If the person looks as if they need assistance, ask if there is something you can do. Do not automatically give help unless the person clearly needs it or has asked for it.
- ✓ **Don't be patronizing.** Show the person the same respect that you expect to receive from others. Treat adults as adults.
- ✓ **Be sensitive to their needs.** Individuals with disabilities are much more independent than people give them credit for. Many times, navigating the physical environment is less frustrating than trying to communicate with people who are not sensitive to their needs.
- ✓ **Do not use euphemisms.** Avoid terms such as *physically challenged* and *differently-abled*. Do not use words that suggest pity or other negative feelings, such as *victim*, *afflicted*, *crippled*, *suffers*, *confined to a wheelchair*.
- ✓ **Do not assume.** What works for one person may not work for others with the same or similar type of disability.
- ✓ **Stay focused.** Limit any inquiries about the person's disability to access and accommodation needs. It is understandable to be curious about someone's disability, and he/she may be willing to talk to you about it, but it has nothing to do with the business of elections.

## STATE OF ALASKA DIVISION OF ELECTIONS



## Voter Assistance Etiquette Guide

## Tips for Alaska's Election Workers

### STATE OF ALASKA DIVISION OF ELECTIONS

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## Assisting voters who have...

### Hearing Impairments

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- ◆ Speak clearly and distinctly, but don't exaggerate. Use normal speech speed unless asked to slow down. Speak directly to the person, instead of from the side or back of the person.
- ◆ If you are having trouble understanding a deaf person's speech, feel free to ask him/her to repeat. If that doesn't work, then use paper and pen. Printed instructions may be useful.
- ◆ If a person who is deaf is with an interpreter, speak directly to the person who is deaf, not to the interpreter.
- ◆ Find out how the person best communicates. If the person reads lips, speak in a normal fashion. Do not exaggerate your speaking. Short and simple sentences are best. Avoid blocking the view of your face and mouth.
- ◆ Get someone's attention by tapping his/her shoulder or gently waving your hand in front of that person before starting a conversation.

### Language Assistance

- ◆ If a voter needs bilingual voting assistance and you are proficient in the local native language, assist the voter by translating the ballot instructions and ballot language for the voter. **DO NOT** attempt to interpret or explain the ballot measures or issues.
- ◆ If you or other workers in your precinct are not proficient in the local native language, assistance should be requested from the native language interpreter listed on the poster provided in the precinct election supplies.

### Visual Impairments

- ◆ Introduce yourself and identify who you are. Give the person verbal information about things that are visually obvious to those who can see. Describe things from their perspective, not yours. Some persons who are blind use a "clock" reference for things or obstacles directly in front of them. For example, you can state, "There is a chair at 10 o'clock." Before using this method, ask the person if it is useful to them.
- ◆ Lead someone who is blind only after he/she has accepted your offer to do so. Touch his/her arm, and then offer your arm to guide that person. Allow the voter to hold your arm rather than you holding onto theirs.
- ◆ Do not pet, or interact with a service animal or guide dog while it is working.
- ◆ Try to keep the path to the voting booth clear of obstacles.
- ◆ Inform the person of snow levels and/or icy conditions when walking on the sidewalk or ramp near the door. This can help prevent accidents.
- ◆ Do not leave a person who is blind in empty space. Provide a physical object, a table, chair, etc. so that she can remain oriented. For example, "The chair at the registration table is directly in front of you, about 18 inches. Would you like me to place your hand on it?"
- ◆ If you are with a person who is blind and need to leave, tell him/her you are going in a low-key way, e.g. "I've got to go check with the election official." Otherwise, he/she may not realize you have gone and try to continue a conversation with no one.

### Mobility Impairments

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- ◆ Watch for voters with mobility issues, and if necessary, assist the voter into the polling place.
- ◆ Offer assistance, but wait until it is accepted before giving it. Giving help before it is accepted is perceived as rude, and can sometimes be unsafe.
- ◆ If a person uses a wheelchair, don't kick the tires, lean on it, or push it without being asked.
- ◆ Eye contact is important when having a one-on-one discussion. Try to find a place to chat where you both share eye-to-eye contact.
- ◆ Talk directly to a person with a disability as a healthy person. Because an individual uses a walker, cane or wheelchair does not mean the individual is sick.
- ◆ Give the person extra time to complete each task.

### Assistance Tips

- ◆ Sample ballots are great tools to assist voters. If voters are standing in line, encourage them to review sample ballots so that they are prepared to vote when they get into the voting booth. Give the person extra time to complete each task.
- ◆ If a touch screen voting unit is available in the polling place, offer disabled voters the opportunity to vote unassisted on the touch screen voting unit.